

# critical digest

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## New York Theatre Week

One Eye Closed- Bijou-11/24. Haila Stoddard presents new comedy by Justin Stum with Tom Helmore, Constance Ford and John Baragrey... Mrs. Patterson-National Leonard Sillman presents a new play by Charles Sebree and Greer Johnson with incidental music by James Shelton. Eartha Kitt, Enid Markey featured... Hit The Trail Hellinger 12/2. Elizabeth Miele presents musical based on story by William Anthony McGuire, adapted by Frank O'Neill. Changed title recently from "On With the Show". Irra Petina, Robert Wright, Paul Valentine featured.

## Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Living Room- Miller 11/17/ Graham Greene's new drama, which was a hit in London, was panned by all but McClain, Journal American, as a play with some fine acting, a few good passages, but on the whole too wordy and meaningless. McClain's mild approval was aimed at only those theatre fans who wanted meat for new arguments, he frankly was confused by it all. Winchell added line to Coleman, Mirror, on notice, the columnist stating show is "No 1. Dramatic Smash." Earnest, but diffuse and wordy, summed up Atkinson, Times, for the majority who didn't enjoy play. Barbara Bel Geddes walked off with acting honors. Hugh Hunt was the original director, but Harold Clurman took over the last week of rehearsals as stager. Chapman, News, thought play dull and generally dispiriting, not "controversial" as it is said to be viewed in England. Watts, Post, tabbed it a religious horror play, while Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, thought it more hifalutin' than contemplative.

Abie's Irish Rose- Holiday 11/18. Two mild pre notices greeted revival of Anne Nichols' stage classic presented by Michael Rose. Coleman, Mirror, admitted it was still a broad comedy, obvious in its humor, but he thought it possessed enormous vitality, humor, heart and humanity. Show Coleman, concluded, is decent sentiment at its best and entertainment for the many. While Hawkins, WT&S, was surprised to find how timeless a play it is for all its faults. He especially enjoyed Anna Appel. Rest of critics vetoed project, but several found worthwhile elements in it. Atkinson, Times, noted that when plot is not cluttering up landscape, it manages to make intolerance look reckless and evil. Kerr, Herald Tribune, is convinced the thing that made show run is the peculiar quality of its badness, an honest badness that is all belief and no calculation. Chapman, News, warned customers that this may be their last chance to see play which stunned him from not laughing. McClain, Journal American, honestly tried to like play, but had to agree it was plainly embarrassing most of the time. Play was a tasteless, primitive comic strip when it first appeared and time has only made it appear worse, slugged Sheaffer, Eagle.

A Doll's House- Finch Theatre-52 E 78. Club Theatre revival of Ibsen classic presented week-ends only through Dec 19 won split notices. Funke, Times panned all except Lesley Woods in leading role, as unequipped to meet the problem. But Herridge, Post, and Kerner, Women's Wear, thought cast does fair job. Both were surprised at dramatic force in 880 script. Latter suggested cast will be better when more at ease. Post drama editor listed play as the second notable revival by the group. Group presented Infernal Machine last season on West 52nd St. before third floor showplace was closed by Fire Department.

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' Off Broadway '

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Central Box Office of Off Broadway Theatre League at 1551 Broadway charges no premium for tickets. Service is being conducted by Theatre-Goers, Inc which gets 5% gross value of tickets sold from theatres... Showcase Theatre and Shakespearewrights groups have joined Off Broadway Theatre League. OFFL has also started a reading service for new scripts.

I Feel Wonderful closes Nov 28 at Theatre de Lys... Rudy Bond and David Ross have replaced Ludwig Donath and Lou Gilbert, in Dybbuk, both now in Abie's Irish Rose. Judith Paige, title player in Abie's Irish Rose, continues in Noah at 5 PM Sundays at Broadway Tabernacle... Jean Anouilh's Thieves Carnival follows at Cherry Lane after Way of the World... The Doctor's Dilemma starring Geraldine Fitzgerald opens at Phoenix Jan 11... The Crucible will be presented Dec 10 at Hudson Guild Community House... Clarence Derwent will appear at Club Theatre production of Merchant of Venice in Jan.

Columbia University's plans for its arts center includes a professional repertory theatre which may be housed in a new theatre in the midtown area.

The Girl from Samos is for the curious who want to know about the kind of comedy that amused the Greeks back in 300 B.C., rates Herridge, Post

French Art Theatre's second season will present plays in French by Maeterlinck and Racine in Feb. Eve Daniel is casting French speaking actors.

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' Vaudeville '

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New Palace show features Watson Sisters, Harry Savoy, Betty Brett, Three Galanes, Milt Ross. Film is "The Unholy Four." ... Last full stage and screen show at Paramount featuring Jackie Gleason & Company starts at 12 midnight

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' Futures '

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Dec 1	MRS. PATTERSON	National
Dec 2	HIT THE TRAIL	Hellinger
Dec 3	THE BAD SEED	46th St
Dec 13	LUNATICS & LOVERS	Broadhurst
Dec 14	HELLO PAREE	
Dec 15	BLACK EYED SUSAN	Playhouse
Dec 16	WITNESS FOR PROSECUTION	
Dec 19	STARS IN PERSONS BACKWARD	
Dec 21	PORTRAIT OF LADY	ANTA
Dec 21	FLOWERING PEACH	Belasco
Dec 22	WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS	C.Center
Dec 27	SAINT OF BLEECKER ST	

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' Theatre Book Comments '

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"George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre" by Wisner Payne Kinne (Harvard) fills an important niche in theatrical literature, okays Down, Variety. Book is thorough and admirably written ... "The First Night of 12th Night" by Dr. Leslie Hotson (MacMillan) contains fascinating and enlightening passages of actors and Bard preparing for command performances, rates Variety mugg. Book has several excellent illustrations, but lacks a much needed index.

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' Theatre TV Comments '

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NBC TV Producers Showcase State of the Union. with Margaret Sullivan and Joseph Cotton was applauded by NY TV critics. Gould, Times, raved over provocative subject, the playwrights to say it amusingly, the players to act it, and the time on TV to do it. O'Brian, Journal American, noted show held its freshness and impudence. He applauded John Cromwell as top player. Though he disagreed with a few of the political ideas expressed, Tuck, Post, agreed show was first rate TV. Critics all noted with praise fact that studio applause was cut.

TUNE WRCA Ben Grauer 7 30 AM day after Broadway opening for quotes of reviews compiled by "C.D."

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' Green Room Department '

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LIONEL BARRYMORE...Famed actor was an American institution, both Times and Herald Tribune obit editorials stated. New Yorkers will remember him with fond memories as a stage actor, Times piece notes admitting he was never a great actor. Herald Tribune editorial billed him as a great American actor loved by millions he never knew, and who will be missed by them as one misses an old friend.

COLUMN TIPS...Oh Men, Oh Women will be picketed in Chicago by American Legion for having some alleged "pinkos" on its staff, hears Winchell...Five Broadway hits are completely sold out for New Years Eve, reports Kilgallen.

OFF BROADWAY VIEWS...Though Nathan, Journal American, realizes that the Off Broadway theatre very evidently appeals to the optimistic dreamers among his colleagues, it seems to him at least thus far its later activities resemble in a way the famous Paris Flea Market to which tourists travel far in the fond faith that they can pick up erstwhile buried treasures, which they discover later could be bought for the same amount of money at a nearby shop...Watts, Post, fears drama critics do unconsciously let their critical standards down a trifle when they find the production doesn't harm the quality of the play too seriously. Reviewer points out danger in sponsors of praised work considering taking their production to Broadway where paying audiences are tougher than critics.

PRO REVIVALS...There is a deep and basic need for revivals in our present day theatre, explains Burr, Playbill. They bring the permanence of art to fill out the glitter of the new, and when well done, they bring added joy to the hearts of all true lovers of the theatre.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Jean Arthur, forced to close Saint Joan in Chicago due to illness, appears to be the most expensive Hollywood invalid to try to "do" a show on the living stage since Bette Davis, chides Chapman, News...Current healthy state of stage revealed to Sobol, Journal American, by large number of top stars who have resisted more lucrative call of cinemas for legit...Acting of current season is in fine shape, rates Watts, Post, it's the playwriting we have to worry about.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Original May 22, 1922 opening of Abie's Irish Rose at Fulton was on same night as seven other drama premieres, author Anne Nichols told Coleman, Mirror. Sole "pro" notice filed by a long-hair from the music department of a daily. Joe Leblang's out rate ticket agency aided show by pushing tickets. Show moved to Republic and played 2327 performances. Original cost of first production was \$5000.

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' Pros & Cons by TMK '

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The Living Room is a dreary "message" play staged at a snail's pace and wasting the talents of some fine actors in very unsympathetic roles. The religious problem presented and its implications could certainly be put on a more attractive frame if the author wished to make his points clear. Far from being "controversial" as predicted, show is boring.

Abie's Irish Rose has its place in theatrical history, and it should stay there. To one who has seen it for the first time it seems a cliché-filled comic strip done in poor taste to all concerned. Actors can't be blamed for lack of intelligent lines and/or lack of direction.

NY's "newest" theatre will be the refurbished ANTA Playhouse which will open the season in December with Portrait of a Lady. A semi-circular counter in the lounge will be the new box-office, patrons will receive numbered tags denoting their place on the waiting line. While the interior which will have 360 more seats, will be in "modernized Federal style."

### Plays

Traveling Lady closed, Fragile Fox closes Nov 27...Hit the Trial is new title of On With Show which opens at Hellinger Dec 2...The Flowering Peach opening pushed forward to Dec 21 or Dec 28...The Bad Seed due to open Dec 8 at 46th St...Black Eyed Susan opens Dec 15 at Playhouse...Columbia Pictures plan to invest in stage plays with screen potential.

### People

Betsy von Furstenberg plays Lady Sybil in What Every Woman Knows at City Center Dec 22, she is now in Houston, Texas rehearsing under Walter Kerr's direction for the opening of King of Hearts with Franchot Tone...Hurd Hatfield signed for Anastasia... Betty and Jane Kean will co-star in Ankles Aweigh musical...John Stix will stage The Wisteria Trees at City Center Feb 2...Mae West and Bobby Clark being sought for new Ziegfeld Follies...Lionel Barrymore died at age 76.

### Other Broadways

Porgy and Bess company, now touring Europe, will play at Milan's La Scala Feb 21...Richard Newton will tour US in Charles Laughton's revival of Richard III...Saint Joan closed in Chicago due to illness of Jean Arthur...Noel Coward will appear at Las Vegas for a reported \$35,000 per week...Hugh Hunt, director of The Living Room, will organize the Australian National Theatre, Ballet and Opera.

### Award Department

Theatre people who won Christopher Awards this season include Irving Berlin, Alan Jay Lerner and Albert McCleery...Denver Post offers a \$10,000 prize for the best, original romantic play on the first discovery of gold in Colorado in 1858.

### Theatre TV & Radio Notes

To Hell With Orpheus, presented two summers ago by St. John Terrell at his Lambertville Music Circus presented on WOR Radio Nov 30...NBC planning to present Mary Martin in Peter Pan after its NY run of 16 weeks.

### Theatre Book Notes

The Solid Gold Cadillac published by Random House..."Shakespeare's First Folio" published by Yale University Press with introduction by Charles Tyler Prouty.

CRITICAL DIGEST  
505-Fifth Ave, NYC

First Class Mail



